

CENSORSHIP AND THE MEDIEVAL COMIC THEATRE IN FRANCE

by Samuel M. Carrington*

Censorship of the medieval comic theatre, be it total proscription or simply a set of restraints, existed in varying degrees of severity and effectiveness. The extant edicts pertaining to the staging of plays originated from many different levels of government—both civil and ecclesiastical—and, in conjunction with other factors, they exercised in both positive and negative ways an important influence on the development, evolution, and eventual disappearance or transformation of such dramatic genres as the farce, *sottie*, *moralité*, *monologue dramatique*, and *sermon joyeux*. Moreover, the divers attempts of kings, *parlementaires*, clergymen, and local magistrates to curb or encourage comic performances and related activities, such as the *fêtes des fous*, reflect to an extent the changing attitudes of these authorities (and of certain segments of society) toward the theatre in general. At the same time certain decrees dating from the later part of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century offer, as do many of the plays themselves, important insights into the social, political, and religious issues of an era in which France was being transformed from a feudal, fragmented state into a modern nation.

In their studies on the medieval comic theatre, critics have either neglected or minimized the importance of censorship and have proposed primarily literary explanations for the development and decline of this theatre. However, in order to appreciate fully the evolution and fate of medieval comedies, the theatrical curbs and the historical, political context in which they were imposed must be considered as well.¹

I

The beginning of a trend by various levels of government and by the Church to censor and regulate comic productions and their content becomes discernible only at the end of the fourteenth century. If the few extant references to curbs placed on comic forms of entertainment prior to this period may serve as reliable indices, censorship was at best sporadic and

*Editor's note: Mr. Carrington is Associate Professor of French at Rice University.

probably ineffective during the early Middle Ages. Yet toward the end of this period and in the fourteenth century, institutions were being molded, traditions established, and events of historical importance occurring which would help bring about the full development of medieval comedy and at the same time set up the machinery for theatrical censorship after 1400.

The earliest forms of dramatic censorship in France were exercised by the Church or by the king and were based seemingly on moral objections to the excesses of certain comic performers. Traditionally and theologically, medieval Western Christendom's position in regard to the theatre such as it had existed in antiquity was essentially that of the early Church Fathers who condemned acting as a form of prostitution in that the actor was selling his voice, facial expressions, and body positions. Decrees were issued which forbade Christians to attend the theatre or to marry actors; the latter could not be admitted to the sacraments of the Church unless they abandoned their profession. These proscriptions, coupled with the fall of the Western Empire, were largely responsible for the disappearance after the sixth century of the Roman farces, mimes, and pantomimes. Also lost was the concept of theatre, and, by extension, of acting as it had flourished during antiquity.

Having an origin and development independent of classical drama, the medieval theatre in France like its predecessors in Greece and Rome came out of religious services, and with the insertion of tropes into the mass during the ninth century, a new concept of theatre and a new attitude toward acting on the part of the Church, disassociated from that of antiquity, were born.² Understanding early the pedagogical value of the visual enactment of Biblical stories for the moral instruction of the masses, the Church actively encouraged and supported the nascent liturgical and semiliturgical theatre. To be sure, certain regulations were imposed by local and diocesan officials in matters of content and staging, but these controls came prior to the actual performances. Finally, while some critics suggest that the staging of semiliturgical plays as moved outside of the church because of an expansion of the dramatic cadre, it is equally probable that in certain instances local ecclesiastical authorities believed that with the addition of apocryphal elements the interior of the church was not a proper setting for the staging of these dramas.

Of more importance to the development of the comic theatre and to the question of theatrical censorship was the early medieval Church's attitude toward the *fêtes des fous* and the *asinaria festa* or *fêtes de l'âne*. Probably being Christian adaptations of the pagan festivities of the Kalends, these burlesque parodies of the divine office and of church dignitaries were usually presented between Christmas and Epiphany by members of the lower clergy of a parish. Because of a lack of evidence to the contrary, it is to be assumed that the ecclesiastical hierarchy looked indulgently at

first upon these ceremonies which, if the premise of Lenient is correct,³ were innocuous in their content. However, as the parodies degenerated into mordant satire and general licentiousness, Church leaders became alarmed and scandalized by the excesses to which the revelers delivered themselves, and from the end of the twelfth century when Eudes de Sully, Bishop of Paris, forbade these ceremonies in all of the parishes of his diocese until the middle of the seventeenth century, the Church vainly tried to curb and suppress these sacrilegious "plays" (often referred to as *ludi*) through diocesan decrees, prohibitions issued by national councils, and papal bulls. It is likely that Saint Thomas Aquinas and other theologians of the thirteenth century had uppermost in mind the *fous*, when, in echoing the position of the early Church concerning actors, they condemned acting as immoral and as a form of prostitution. Despite these moral objections to the *fêtes*, the members of the clergy were not in complete agreement with the banning of the parodies as may be seen in a decree from the Council of Paris in 1212 which forbade archbishops and bishops as well as priests and monks to stage any *fêtes des fous*.

The curbing of comic entertainers by temporal authorities parallels the actions taken by the Church against the *fous*. At the beginning of the thirteenth century Philip Augustus, known for his religious fervor, banished from court all *histrions*, probable forerunners of some of the later medieval *farceurs*, and spent the money otherwise destined for this form of entertainment on works of charity.⁴ Although this action must be accepted at its face value, it may have also been influenced by Eudes de Sully, Bishop of Paris, for while enforcing a papal interdict issued because of Philip's scandalous attempt to divorce Ingeburg of Denmark and to have his mistress, Agnès de Méranie, declared queen, the bishop had at the same time arranged a reconciliation between the king and Innocent III. Despite this action by Philip, the later Capetian monarchs continued more or less the custom of retaining the *histrions* in their entourage, although the pious Saint Louis in his more austere moments supposedly punished them for their excesses.

Be that as it may, it is likely that, with the exception of the licentiousness of the *histrions* and the *fous*, neither the government nor the Church was overly concerned with policing comic entertainers, a task which was probably left to local constabularies. Where censorship did exist, it took the form of an action against or a reaction to an immediate problem, and other than a moral condemnation of the intemperance of certain types of actors, there was neither a general "philosophy" nor a uniform enforcement of censorship. Nor was there a need for such curbs prior to the later part of the fourteenth century. The first extant comedies, like the *Jeu de Robin et Marion* which dates from the end of the thirteenth century, do not contain the licentiousness and mordant political satire characteristic

of many of the later farces and *sotties*; the themes are generally nonpolitical and inoffensive in matters of religion; and the plots tend to be either nonexistent or innocuous. The crude, simplistic humor of the *Farce du garçon et l'aveugle*—a visual presentation of the *gauloiserie* already prevalent in the popular literature—stands in sharp contrast to the obscene subject matter of the *Farce des trois chambrières qui vont à la messe* in order to be “*aspergées*” by the priest, or to the bitter political satire to be found in Gringoire’s *Sottie contre le pape Jules II*.

Although the comic theatre was only slowly evolving during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there were important social and political developments taking place during this period which would determine the thematic and satirical thrusts of the late medieval comic theatre as well as give a new orientation to theatrical censorship. In many ways it was a period of transition from and a rupture with the cultural, political, and religious patterns and traditions of the classical Middle Ages. New institutions emerged and became integral parts of the social framework while already established institutions were being transformed. At the same time certain historical developments reached a culminating point and began changing the somewhat religiously oriented, idealistic thinking patterns of early medieval man into those grounded in the pragmatism and stark, often cynical reality and skepticism reflected in the *moralités* and farces of the fifteenth century.

The first of these developments concerned the Church in general and the papacy in particular. The confrontations between popes and French monarchs over the temporal rights and privileges of each opened and closed the thirteenth century. However, with the death of Boniface VIII in 1303 and the election of the French Clement V in 1305, the political power of later medieval popes was greatly diminished, and with the moving of the papacy to Avignon there was a decidedly French influence evident in many papal decisions. Weakening further the authority of the papacy was the Great Schism which saw the election of rival popes, Urban VI in 1377 and Clement VII, supported by France, in 1378. Coupled to the decline of papal power was a decline in the moral authority of the clergy. In France the crusading Church Militant of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries degenerated rapidly into the Church Complacent and Indolent, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, ranging from prelates drawn from the aristocracy to undisciplined mendicants, began to project to society an image of worldly luxury and corruption.

Equally important to the creation of a viable comic theatre in the fifteenth century was the Hundred Years War. Between 1346 when the French suffered a disastrous defeat at Crécy and around 1438 when Charles VII had regained most of the territory conquered earlier by the English, France was, except for a few respites, in a state of political turmoil and social

and economic instability which inhibited efforts to govern effectively. The brutalities of the war and the political intrigues left a strong imprint on the thinking patterns of the fifteenth-century Frenchman. Although the chaos did not arrest the development of the comic theatre, the immediate effect was to retard somewhat its evolution. At the same time, however, the conflicts of the period reenforced to a large extent the relative degree of freedom of expression found in the previous popular literature and gave credence to the idea of a "legacy" of dramatic freedom which the *farceurs* and Basochians would later claim for their theatrical productions.

However, the most important development leading paradoxically not only to the "systematic" attempts of the late Middle Ages to censor plays but also to the full development of the comic theatre itself was the establishment of a viable bureaucratic structure within the government during the fourteenth century. In principle the king was the ultimate judge and lawgiver of the realm, and as a rule all major decisions, all laws, and all final appeals were decided by him, sitting with his *curia regis*. This judicial, legislative structure proved adequate for the small, decentralized government of the early Capetians, but as royal power, lands, and prestige increased and as laws and the mechanics of government became more complex and sophisticated, commissions of specialists were needed to advise the king and *curia* on questions of law, finance, and coinage. Out of the advisory commissions evolved sovereign courts responsible to the monarch, the most important being that of the *magistri curiae* which had the responsibility of giving advice on important cases of litigation. Known later as the Parlement de Paris which Philip IV made independent of the *curia*, it was charged with dispensing justice and interpreting laws for the entire kingdom. During the fifteenth century through precedence and because of the chaos created during the Hundred Years War, the *parlementaires* became legislators as well,⁵ and by the end of the century they had jurisdiction over municipal governments within royal lands and were responsible for registering and thereby validating all treaties and royal edicts.⁶

Along with the creation of sovereign courts like the Parlement de Paris, there developed a corps of clerks to help the members with routine administrative matters. Usually recruited from the ranks of unsuccessful and often unruly law students, the clerks formed very early their own professional associations—hence the appearance in the thirteenth century of the Petite Basoche attached to the Parisian Châtelet, in the fourteenth century the Grande Basoche of the Parlement de Paris, and later such provincial organizations as the Connards of the Parlement de Rouen.⁷ Many of these associations were in the vanguard of the resurgence of the comic theatre in the fifteenth century and most of the comic actors came from the ranks of these groups. It was particularly against the Basoches of Paris that much of the censorship, exercised by the Parlement de Paris, was directed.

II

By the opening of the fifteenth century, France was thus completing its break with the traditions and cultural patterns of the early Middle Ages; new institutions were appearing and old ones changing; in many ways much of the period, reacting against and reflecting events of the past, was an age of decadence—cultural, literary, social, and moral. It was also a period in which the average man was posing many questions concerning his relationship to society and the abuses occurring around him. Compared to his more idealistic counterpart of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, he was more cynical, more concerned with the realities of everyday life and their effect on him, less susceptible to abstraction. Possessing also a certain amount of skepticism and even defiance vis-à-vis the established order, he was in essence looking for a new identity through which to express himself, and in this search he was given to excesses in conduct—the dichotomy of cruelty and licentiousness on the one hand and of religiosity and extreme emotionalism on the other. With perhaps the exception of the comparatively refined poetic expression of François Villon, nowhere is this imbalance between man and the social order better shown than in the comic theatre of the period.⁸ At the same time it is to the expression of this imbalance that restraints on comic actors often addressed themselves.

In general the "philosophy" of censorship and the forms which it took vis-à-vis the late medieval comic theatre underwent three successive transformations which correspond to the reigns of the last four direct Valois kings (1380–1498), of Louis XII of the Valois-Orléans branch (1498–1515), and of the first two Valois-Angoulême monarchs (1515–1559). Paris being the political as well as one of the important theatrical centers of the realm, most of the edicts originate from the authorities of that area and best reveal the attitudes of national leaders toward dramatic freedom. Before 1498 censorship is characterized by a lack of consistency in the application of and reasons for theatrical curbs. However, although the censorial decrees are frequently little more than reactions to specific violations, the machinery for systematic regulation of comic performances begins to appear during the latter part of the period.

In the first recorded effort to curb dramatic entertainment in the late medieval period, the Prévôt de Paris, the chief police officer of the area, forbade in 1395 "à tous menestriers de bouche et recorders de ditz, qu'ils ne facent, dyent ne chantent, en place ne ailleurs, aucuns dits, rymes, ne chançons qui facent mencion du Pape, du Roy et des Seigneurs de France au regard de ce qui touche le fait de l'union de l'Eglise." Punishment for violation of the decree was to be an arbitrary fine and imprisonment on bread and water. This ordinance was followed by a more specific one dating from June 3, 1398:

Nous [the Prévôt] deffendons de par le roy nostre sire a tous les manens et habitans

en la ville de Paris, de Saint-Mor, et autres villes de autour Paris, que ilz ne facent ne se esbatent aucuns jeux de personages par maniere de farces, de vies de sains, ne autrement, sens le congié du dit seigneur, ou de nous, et sur peine de encourir en indignacion du roy, et de soy fourfaire envers luy.

According to records in the archives of the Châtelet, the decree was violated shortly thereafter by a group which presented a *mystère* in the abovementioned Saint-Maur-des-Fossés. At the same time the officers of the group, known as the Confrérie de la Passion, appealed to Charles VI who at the end of 1402 granted them *lettres patentes* to "jouer quelque Misterre que ce soit, soit de la dicte Passion, et Ressurreccion, ou autre quelconque tant de saincts comme de saintes." However, in granting this monopoly to stage religious plays in the Parisian area, the king took the precaution to stipulate that one or several of the Prévôt's officers could be present at all performances. The following year, the latter authorized the productions and assigned two *sergents* to keep surveillance over the performances.⁹

Referring specifically to the tensions which were being generated by the Great Schism and to the unsuccessful efforts of France to resolve the conflict, the first of these ordinances was evidently based on political considerations of national importance and was probably supported if not encouraged by the royal court, although the *prévôts* of the period often wielded a great amount of arbitrary authority. With its repeated references to the king, the second decree leaves the impression that Charles VI was at least partially responsible for its issuance. However, the phraseology is formulaic, and in the *lettres patentes* of 1402 the monarch specifically states that the action would not have been taken if he had been present. The Prévôt was therefore acting on his own authority.

Unlike its counterpart of 1395, the ordinance of 1398 was designed not to ban a specific thing but to set up a procedure for reviewing a play's content. The base for censorship was consequently broadened to include religious as well as comic plays and to permit a stricter policing of all types of satire as well as religious dramas. One wonders if the decree reflects certain moral objections to combining in one performance religious and profane subjects, for before and after the issuing of the *lettres patentes* of 1402, the Confrérie frequently inserted farces and *moralités* into their religious dramas.

The next recorded act of theatrical censorship comes toward the middle of the reign of Charles VII. In 1442 a much angered Parlement de Paris issued an edict requiring that all satires which were to be staged publicly by the Basochians be submitted to a censor. The ordinance was violated in August of the same year by several law clerks who were subsequently imprisoned for several days; once again the Parlement enjoined the Basoche to receive its authorization and to avoid touching on certain unspecified subjects. Although the reasons for the edicts remain unknown, there could

have been a number of possible causes: personal attacks on certain *parlementaires*, criticism of some governmental policy, or a licentiousness offensive to the magistrates—all important elements in the extant Basochian theatre.

Charles VII appears not to have concerned himself with imposing curbs on comic actors, and it is likely that he preferred to allow his Parlement to occupy itself with policing the theatre. With the exception of a passage in the *Pragmatic Sanction* of 1438 banning the *fêtes des fous* and an edict prohibiting the Basochians from offending the reputation of citizens and distracting from the purity of manners, there are no surviving documents showing royal intervention in favor of or against the comic theatre.

The most repressive measures against the comic theatre in Paris during the fifteenth century come during the later part of the reign of Louis XI in the form of edicts issued by the Parlement de Paris between 1473 and 1477. The first ordinance ordered the clerks not to discontinue the staging of plays during those times of the year which were customary¹⁰ without first obtaining permission to do so. This edict was followed by one in 1474 which forbade the Basochians from staging publicly or privately any comedies on May Day before obtaining authorization from the Parlement; the decree was issued again in the following year. In 1476 an even more stringent edict was passed when the magistrates decided that it would be a crime even to seek its permission to present any plays in public; on the other hand no mention was made regarding private performances.

La Cour . . . a defendu et defend à tous clerks et serveurs, tant du Palais que du Chastelet de Paris, de quelque estat qu'ils soient, que doresnavant ilz ne jouent publicquement audit Palais et Chastelet, ny ailleurs en lieux publics, farces, sotties, moralitez ne aultres jeux à convocation de peuple, sur peine de banissement de ce royaume, et de confiscation de tous leurs biens; et qu'ilz ne demandent congé de ce faire à la dite Cour, ne autres; sur peine d'estre privé à tousjours, tant dudit Palais que dudit Chastelet.

Finally, in 1477 the members of Parlement prohibited Jehan l'Esveillé, "soy-disant roy de la Bazoche," and all others—individually and collectively, under pain of lashing and exile—to stage publicly any farces and *moralités*. These last two acts seem to have permanently terminated all public dramatic activity by the Basochians during the remainder of the reign of Louis XI.

Although the reasons for this censorship are not given, several possibilities present themselves. During the period in which these ordinances appeared, Louis was in a death-grip struggle with the Duke of Burgundy, and it is possible that the Basochian plays contained references critical of royal policy. On the other hand, the "spider king" became during the last years of his reign harsher, more intolerant, and more autocratic, and since he personally appointed members of Parlement during the last fifteen years of his life,¹¹ it is quite possible that the parliamentary acts are but reflections of the king's sensitivity to any criticism which may have appeared in the

clerks' comedies. Finally, there is always the possibility that the actors shocked the more conservative magistrates with their excesses or that they were overly critical of the latter in their satires.

Reviving their dramatic activities after the death of Louis XI, the Basochians apparently enjoyed a relative degree of freedom from censorship by Parlement and king, since there is only one example of measures taken against the actor-clerks during the reign of Charles VIII. The accession of the new monarch to the throne at the age of thirteen had placed the nation in a state of internal political turmoil which was to last until 1487. The conflict, revolving around which group of nobles was to serve as "advisers" to the young and poorly tutored king, pitted Charles' shrewd sister and brother-in-law, Anne and Pierre de Beaujeu, against a coalition of aristocrats headed by the heir presumptive to the throne, Louis, Duke of Orleans. Trying to consolidate their influence and to gain at the same time favor with as many people as possible, the Beaujeu made proposals which would appeal to broad segments of society: they canceled overdue taxes, reduced the *taille*, and freed political prisoners. Yet, despite these and similar measures, the couple was never popular with many of the people from whom they were seeking support.

In 1486 Henri Baude, a tax appeal court judge, had the Basochians present his now lost *Moralité de Droit, Mauvaise Volonté, Profit Singulier* which he described in later verses as:

Une briefve moralité,
En laquelle on a recité
Que droit est souvent interdit
A maint par malle volenté,
Avecques singulier proufit.

Although the purity of royal intentions was portrayed, the king was depicted as being surrounded by corrupt, inefficient counsellors.¹² The royal reaction, be it that of the king or of the Beaujeu, was swift and angry: "nous [Charles VIII] avons esté informé que, en nostre ville de Paris le premier jour de ce present mois, aucuns, sous ombre de jouer, ou faire jouer, certaines moralités et farces, ont publiquement dit, ou fait dire, plusieurs paroles seditieuses, sonnans commotion, principalement touchant à nous et à nostre estat." Although he had previously obtained Parlement's authorization to stage the play, Baude and several of the actors were imprisoned by the criminal prosecutor of the Châtelet in the name of the king. With the support of the *prévôt* of the merchants and the Bishop of Paris, the *parlementaires* protested the king's action on the grounds that the Basochians were under their jurisdiction; as a result of this appeal the accused were freed shortly thereafter.

The entire affair is of interest because it is the first known example of a conflict between royal and parliamentary wills over theatrical cen-

sorship. At the same time the fact that Baude, a judge, had written the play suggests that other magistrates may have also been writing comedies at this period, a situation which would explain in part the Parlement's noninvolvement in theatrical censorship during the reigns of Charles VIII and Louis XII.

Along with the royal court and Parlement, the Church played a role in theatrical censorship during the fifteenth century. However, because its moral authority had already been eroded by corruption, excessive luxury, and a strong current of secularism, its condemnations of the secular theatre often were of little consequence. Few documents of a national character exist which show the Church's attitude; what positions were taken were always negative, were directed primarily against the participants in the *fêtes des fous*, and attempted to curb the excesses of these *fêtes*. In 1436 the Council of Basel condemned "*larvales et theatrales jocos*" (masquerades and theatrical plays) as well as the *fêtes des fous*. After consulting with the leaders of the Gallican Church, Charles VII issued in 1438 the *Pragmatic Sanction* which contained most of the decisions made by the Council of Basel and which specifically banned the annual *fêtes*. Twenty years later, the Council of Soissons issued a blanket condemnation of all "*jeux de théâtre et les déguisements*."¹³ However, none of these decrees had any lasting effect on curbing the comic theatre; in fact, during the later part of the century many prelates favored or at least tolerated comic forms of drama, and in most cases they were powerless in disciplining their lower clergy. In 1445 at Troyes the priests and deacons of several churches publicly staged, despite prohibitions to the contrary, the now lost *Moralité de Hypocrisie, Feintise, Faux-Semblant* which contained veiled attacks on the local bishop and two canons. In addition the celebrants reestablished the custom of having the annual *fêtes des fous* under the pretext that the *Pragmatic Sanction* was soon to be revoked. Neither action seems to have been punished.

Of more interest is an incident which took place at Rheims in 1490 when the *vicaires* and *enfants de chœur* presented during the *fêtes des fous* plays in which the local *bourgeoises* were ridiculed for having adopted the hat styles of the women of Paris. Wishing to retort to this criticism and violating the archbishop's interdiction of all theatrical representations, the city's Basochians staged farces at the Temple whose commander claimed that he was not under the Church's jurisdiction. The following day, the clerks ran through the streets asking why priests were not paying the *taille*. The archbishop's only recourse in an affair which had political overtones was to excommunicate the instigators and to refuse one of them permission to take orders.¹⁴

An important semiautonomous branch of the Church was the University whose students were quite active in the medieval comic theatre. While

some of their plays were in Latin, their repertory contained a number of comedies in French whose performances were often open to the public. In content, structure, and themes these plays differed little from the other farces, *moralités*, and *sotties* of the period, and the censorship exercised by the university administrators was usually in answer to the nonobservance of propriety or because the plays were too satirical.

In 1462 the University of Paris, sitting in solemn assembly, denounced the license to be found in student productions and enjoined the various masters to maintain stricter control over the plays' content. At the same time, the assembly specified that propriety in manners had to be observed and that those satirizing high officials in government would be severely punished.¹⁵ In 1470 in an effort to suppress the students' equivalent to the *fêtes des fous*, the Faculty of Arts prohibited any student from wearing in the colleges or in public a fool's costume except when he was acting in a farce or *moralité*. Violation of this rule was to be expulsion from the University for two years. In 1483 the Parlement de Paris complained to the rector that certain *principaux* were permitting the students to stage "improper" comedies. The University subsequently enjoined the former to review all plays before authorizing their performances and to eliminate all passages attacking specific individuals; the decree was renewed ten times. Finally, the severest curbs imposed by the University on the student theatre came in 1488. Revoking the students' privilege to stage plays except during Epiphany, the Faculty of Arts also specified that the *principal* or one of the *régents* in each college had to review and approve each play prior to its performance. The plays themselves, which the students had to give in their own separate colleges, could contain no satire, and the *mise-en-scène* and costuming had to be in keeping with the simplicity of academic life. Finally, the performers could not ask for money from the spectators. Violators of the regulation were to be whipped in front of the assembled students, and if they failed to appear for punishment they would face permanent suspension and a revocation of their academic rights.¹⁶

Students at provincial universities were probably as active in the comic theatre as their counterparts in Paris; however, the degree of censorship which existed there is unknown, although it probably paralleled that of the University of Paris. There is one example of university officials encouraging political satire in plays. Around 1492 Charles VIII refused to confirm the University of Caen's exemption from taxation, a privilege granted in 1431 by Henry VI of England. The University protested vociferously in the *Farce de Pates-Ouaintes* which the students performed several times.¹⁷

Few references can be found to theatrical censorship imposed by provincial magistrates. Not directly involved in the political intrigues occurring in the capital and bored by the daily routine of provincial life, these officials

probably adopted a more indulgent attitude toward what type of satire could be permitted. However, if the satire became too caustic or if the plays were too obscene, it is likely that some type of judicial action was taken against offenders.

Two examples of local censorship bear mentioning. The first, from Dijon in 1447, concerned a group of merchants headed by Jehan Savenot who staged a farce during the presentation of a *mystère*. Seen performed two years earlier by Savenot at Beaune, the play allegedly contained passages mocking the honor of the king, the dauphin and several of their advisers; the most politically offensive verses contained a reference to the king's soldiers as being *écorcheurs* (i.e., outlaws, slayers, or freebooters). After the *clerc procureur* had launched an investigation, the municipal counsellors caused Savenot to be indicted in order to preserve the honor and reputation of the city. Unfortunately, the outcome of the case is unknown, but these actions were obviously taken by the magistrates because their feudal lord, the Duke of Burgundy, had just reached a reconciliation with his traditional enemy, the king; also, the latter was beginning to enforce the provisions of the Ordonnance d'Orléans which provided for the abolition of the infamous freebooters and for the creation of a permanent army.¹⁸ The other example of local censorship dates from 1457 and may be seen as a reaction to the nonobservance of propriety. Inspired by the sermons of a Dominican and a Carmelite, clerks from the king's Chancellery at Lyons ridiculed in their plays the women of the city for their frivolity and vanity. One of the city counsellors complained about the licentiousness of the remarks, and the Consulat charged municipal authorities with reviewing and authorizing all future dramatic performances.

During the reign of Louis XII theatrical censorship was practically non-existent. Encouraging freedom of dramatic expression, the monarch recognized early the value of an active and satirical comic theatre. While it served as a safety valve for the expression of social discontent, it also informed the king of the causes of the discontent. Jehan Bouchet relates the following anecdote in his *Annales d'Acquaine*:

Je fus quelque present, luy [Louis XII] parlant . . . des jeux que faisoient les Bazochiens à Paris et aussi ceux des colleges, qui parloient des seigneurs de la Court et ceux qui estoyent pres de sa personne. "Je veux qu'on joue en liberté, et que les Jeunes gens declairent les abus qu'on fait en ma Court, puisque les confesseurs et autres qui sont sages, n'en veulent rien dire."¹⁹

Guillaume Bouchet reports in his *Serées*, published toward the end of the century, that Louis believed that his ministers were hiding information from him and that the only means of learning the truth was through the satire in the comic theatre.²⁰

With their appeal to the masses the farces and *sotties* also offered to

the monarch a potentially important vehicle for governmental propaganda. By allowing the Basochians and others heretofore unheard of freedom and by cultivating at the same time their favor and even allegiance, Louis gained powerful and influential allies in his military campaigns in Italy and in his quarrels with the Holy See. While it is not uncommon to find the king and his advisers as targets of satire,²¹ most of the extant comic plays of the period are preoccupied with supporting the government's foreign policy. In the *Sottie contre le pape Jules II*, for example, the righteous Prince des Sots (Louis) seeks peace with the Mère Sotte, a corrupt, senile old woman (the pope) who in her quest for absolute temporal power demands the complete submission of everyone. Yet despite this degree of dramatic freedom, there were limitations placed on the type of lampoons which the king would tolerate. On two occasions early in his reign, disparaging remarks were made about the queen, Anne de Bretagne. The king thereupon commanded all actors to refrain always from attacking the honor of ladies in high position; the penalty for disobedience would be death.²²

The only real theatrical censorship exercised during this reign apparently came from municipal courts. In 1506 at Houville-lez-Rouen, a priest composed and staged publicly a farce which attacked a certain sieur Robert Charpentier; the latter counterattacked with a play of his own ridiculing the priest. The local court intervened and sentenced the priest to eight days in prison and a fine of forty sous while Charpentier was assessed a fine of thirty sous. In 1513 at Lyons, a group of Florentines residing in the city were accused in a certain play of being partisans of the pope; upon complaint to the *échevins* they received permission to stage farces defending the papacy.

With the accession of the Valois-Angoulême branch of the royal family to the throne, theatrical censorship reappeared in a stronger form and with more stringent regulations imposed on the content and staging of comic plays. Just as the satire of the farces, *moralités*, and *sotties* sought to broaden its base in order to meet new demands and to reflect new conditions, the "philosophy" or orientation of censorship had to expand and to evolve also. In many ways this shift in emphasis was made necessary by events and situations which had begun to shape a new France at the end of the fifteenth century. The consolidation of power, the gradual restoration of internal stability and peace, and the reorganization of the sociopolitical structure achieved by previous monarchs improved communications and brought about a more uniform system of royal justice within the nation. Closer ties were formed between Paris and the provinces which reacted more often and more rapidly to cultural and political stimuli coming from the capital. Finally, the increased level of dramatic activity in the provinces and

in Paris required a correspondingly greater surveillance and policing of the comic theatre. Yet, despite the expansion of the repertory of the medieval comedy during the first half of the sixteenth century, one can discern a steady decline in the quality and vitality of these plays, a decline for which the theatrical censorship of the period was largely responsible.²³

Coming to the throne while royal power and prestige were continuing their ascendancy, Francis I brought with him a new concept of kingship—the absolute monarch who with his sacerdotal qualities was above the laws and traditions of the state—a concept diametrically opposed to the traditional view of the Parlement that the monarch was a legislator who worked within the framework of these traditions and laws. As a consequence of the introduction and elaboration of the doctrine of royal absolutism, Parlement assumed a new role, made all the more imperative by the introduction of Protestantism into France, and it became not only the conservative defender of its concept of a monarchy established on the customs and laws of the land but also the guardian of a reformed, disciplined Roman Catholicism as embodied in the rights and privileges of the Gallican Church.²⁴ It is from these two focal points that much of the theatrical censorship between 1515 and 1550 would manifest itself.

The first attempts to curb theatrical satire were initiated by the king and not the Parlement, and the censorial methods used were as unorthodox as Francis was impetuous. In the spring of 1515 a priest named Monsieur Cruche staged some comedies at the Place Maubert; among these plays there was a farce in which he had a lantern

. . . par laquelle voyoit toutes choses, et entre autres qu'il y avoit une poulle qui se nourrissoit soubz une sallemante, laquelle poulle portoit sur elle une chose qui estoit assez pour faire mourir dix hommes. Laquelle chose estoit à interpreter que le Roy aymoît et joyssoit d'une femme de Paris qui estoit fille d'un conseiller à la cour de Parlement . . .

Shortly afterwards, several *gentilshommes* sent by the king sought out the cleric whom they beat and would have thrown into the river if the poor man had not shown them “sa couronne de prestre.”²⁵ At the end of the year “furent menez prisonniers devers le Roy à Amboyse, troys prisonniers de Paris joueurs de farces, c'est à sçavoyr Jacques le Bazochin, Jehan Seroc et maistre Jehan du Pontalez.” The three men were accused of having staged a farce in which Mere Sotte, representing the queen mother, Louise de Savoie, was portrayed as governing the court and robbing everyone about her. Greatly angered, the king had the actors imprisoned at Blois from which they escaped three months later; the *farceurs* eventually received full pardons.²⁶

These actions, coming in relatively rapid succession, showed early Francis' impetuosity and sensitivity to satire of himself and those about him. Rather than working through his courts, as custom and judicial precedent dictated,

he apparently decided to employ in both cases "extralegal" forms of censorship.²⁷

Apparent royal censorship appeared again in either late 1524 or early 1525.²⁸ In March of the latter year several printers and playwrights were freed from prison by order of the queen mother, who was serving as regent while Francis was being held captive by the Spanish. The crime had been the composition and publication of satires which attacked the king personally and criticized his foreign policy. Whether the incarceration came by royal order or after judicial action by the Parlement or some other court is unknown.

The most interesting example of royal reaction to political satire dates from the end of 1525; not only did it involve national security in a period of grave crisis, as did the preceding case, but it also cast the Parlement into the unusual role of being an accomplice after the fact to the incident; the affair also shows the degree to which governmental control of satirical elements in comic plays was effective. In a detailed account the "Bourgeois de Paris" relates that:

fut faict à Paris une chose de merveilleuse folye. C'est qu'il y eust cinq ou six hommes estans montez sur des asnes, affublez de chapperons de drap verd, qui firent des cris par les carrefours de la ville, et par especial en la grande cour du Palais devant la pierre de marbre, tenans un roollet où ilz disoient plusieurs choses joyeuses, faisans manieres qu'ilz vouloient jouer quelques jeux, et toutesfois ilz ne le vouloient faire. Et entre autres paroles disoient: "Le Roy est mort, les sages le celent, mais les folz le revelent." Et furent ces choses par maniere de mocquerie, parce que lors le bruit estoit fort grand que le Roy estant prisonnier en Espagne estoit mort et qu'on le celoït. . . . De tout ce madame la Regente estant à Lyon eut nouvelles. . . . Parquoy elle manda à monsieur Morin, lieutenant du baillif de Paris, qu'il en fist la justice pour les punir; dont ledict Morin en fist prendre aucuns et emprisonner, mais de ce il n'en fut rien faict. On dit que c'estoient des clerckz de la bazoche du Palais; mais à la fin rien n'en fut plus, et demeura cela sans en faire autre chose ne autre poursuite contre ceulx qui ce firent. . . .²⁹

The reluctance of the *parlementaires* to instigate any judicial inquiry or proceedings (thereby neglecting to carry out all of the regent's instructions)—a detail which the "Bourgeois" dwells on almost incredulously at the end of the passage—seemingly indicates that the "performance" in question had at least their implied sanction. If this were the case, then the clerks' hesitancy to present their play might have been due to a fear of punishment, arbitrary or otherwise, coming from the royal court or officers. Still, although the magistrates had recently attempted to block Louise de Savoie's becoming regent, no satisfactory explanation can be found for their apparent inaction during a period of national crisis. It is possible that they felt that the imprisoned clerks had suffered enough or that the incident did not warrant severe punishment.

The bulk of edicts and judicial verdicts pertaining to theatrical censorship between 1515 and 1559 comes from the Parlement de Paris, its sister

institutions in the provinces, and local authorities. As in the fifteenth century the magistrates censored from the comic plays violent attacks on individuals, obscene phrases, and political satire; however, there was a shift of emphasis in regard to censorship. National and ideological considerations tended to transcend immediate, almost individual concerns; many edicts stressed what would be or would not be permissible in comic plays; there was even an occasional effort to appreciate the position of the comic actor. At the same time theatrical surveillance and regulation became stricter and more methodical, especially in the capital.

One of the first acts of censorship by the Parlement de Paris during the reign of Francis I dates from January 5, 1516 (n.s.) and addressed itself to the members of the University of Paris who were now under its legal jurisdiction. Obviously having in mind the king's reaction to the plays of Monsieur Cruche and of Jacques le Basochian, the magistrates explicitly prohibited the staging of any plays in the colleges which attacked the honor "du Roy, de la Reyne, de Madame la duchesse d'Angoulesme, mere du dit seigneur, des seigneurs du sang, ne autres personnages estans autour de la personne dudict seigneur."³⁰ On several occasions during the politically turbulent 1520's the magistrates banned plays which they considered to be inflammatory and capable of causing sedition.

It was only in 1536, however, that there began to emerge the institution of regular censorship by the Parlement, especially as it was applicable to the Basochian theatre. In an edict of that year the clerks were forbidden to reinsert censored material or to designate individuals being satirized by "escritaux taxants ou notants quelque personne que ce soit." Two years later, plays had to be regularly submitted to a censor and receive authorization from the court prior to performance. These measures were renewed in 1540 with the stipulation that the plays could not "taxer ou scandaliser particulièrement aucune personne, soit par noms ou surnom, ou circonstance d'estoc [origin], ou lieu particulier de demourance, et autres notables circonstances par lesquelles on peut designer ou connoistre les personnes." Finally, in 1561 the Parlement required that a copy of the approved version of a play had to be left with the tribunal. It should be noted in passing that on two occasions it was not a question of censorship when the magistrates banned the staging of plays. In early 1515 the Basochians were refused permission because the nation was still in a state of official mourning over the death of Louis XII; however, the *parlementaires* recompensed the clerks for their expenses and allowed them to give a private performance before Francis I when he made his first official entrance into the city as king. In 1545 an epidemic was spreading into Paris, and the Parlement, aware of the gravity of the situation, once again suspended theatrical performances.

The role which provincial *parlements* played in theatrical censorship parallels rather closely that of the Parlement de Paris before 1560. Aside

from preserving public order, policing the dramatic activities of the law clerks (the Connards at Rouen or the Basochians of Bordeaux, for example), curbing obscenity or vitriolic political and religious satire, and reviewing the content of individual plays, these courts were also called upon to adjudicate disputes between rival dramatic organizations. The acts of the Parlement de Bordeaux serve as an excellent illustration of the censorial functions of these regional assemblies. In 1534 an itinerant actor attempted to enlist the aid of the barbers' guild in performing plays attacking the Basochians; the Parlement intervened and forbade it. In 1545, the same body required the law clerks to submit their plays to parliamentary scrutiny before staging them publicly or privately. As the positions of the Protestants and Catholics became more polarized and as the verbal attacks of the former became more vicious, the Parlement had to decree that no plays could contain references injurious or insulting to Catholics. In 1556, for example, all actors were forbidden to stage any play concerning the Catholic faith, the veneration of saints, or the Church's sacraments. In the same year at Rouen a touring company headed by Pierre Le Pardonneur had its plays examined by two priests before being able to obtain that Parlement's authorization for their performance.³¹

Theatrical ownership on the local level was by and large concerned with the observance of propriety and respect for traditional values. The complex regulations required in the city were not needed in the small towns and villages where the level of dramatic activity was not high; also it was easier for the local magistrates to keep a close surveillance on the plays staged by local groups and often subsidized by the municipality.³² When it became necessary for an official to step in, he usually did so in the capacity of a judge. Such was the case at Montgeron in 1518 when an ecclesiastic, Alard Bunon, was fined twenty-four sous for having publicly presented a play in which he assumed the rôle of a *fol* and spoke irreverently of the saints. Toward the middle of the century, however, even the local magistrate tended to censor all political and religious satire, and as a rule he was more conservative and severer in this respect than his counterpart in the larger cities.³³

The Catholic Church during the reigns of Francis I and Henry II exerted little direct influence on theatrical censorship; the curbs which did exist came usually from local clergymen who decided such matters as whether a play could be presented on church property.³⁴ On the other hand, where strong measures were required, it was usually the civil authorities who issued the necessary prohibitions; as has been seen in the case of Le Pardonneur at Rouen, local priests aided on occasion the magistrates in an advisory capacity. In any event the moral opprobrium which was attached by the Church to the comic theatre in the fifteenth century did not for all practical purposes exist during this period. On the contrary, priests and monks took

active parts in comic representations, and there are many recorded instances where prelates encouraged and invited comic actors to stage plays before them.³⁵

Initially, the Protestants in France had no moral or theological objections to the comic theatre and in fact appear to have cultivated it a great deal. In such comic forms as the *moralité*, their preferred genre, they saw an important vehicle for presenting to the people their religious ideas and for attacking the basic beliefs and practices of Roman Catholicism; the comic theatre created by the Protestants was consequently mordantly satirical, polemical, and didactic. Matthieu Malingre's *Moralité de la maladie de Chrétienté*, published in 1533, presents Chrétienté as an "honneste dame" who has become wicked and vicious; a diagnosis of her urine reveals that she has been poisoned by Hypocrisie, who is dressed as a nun.³⁶ The opposition of the Calvinists to all forms of dramatic entertainment did not begin to crystallize until after 1550 and to have itself translated into official sanctions before 1560.³⁷

Finally, the tight control which the universities tried to maintain on the student theatre during the last half of the fifteenth century no longer existed during the first part of the Renaissance and, as has already been seen, the policing of this theatre generally came under the jurisdiction of the king's magistrates. Occasionally university officials tolerated or encouraged the comic theatre and its satire. In 1521 at Paris the students were staging plays which defended and attacked the Reformation³⁸; despite the objections of three of the University's four faculties, the administration continued to tolerate these productions provided that members of the royal family were not attacked—a proviso conforming to the edict issued by Parlement in 1516. There were however efforts by officials to abolish the licentious *fêtes* held during Epiphany. In 1539 the rector, Jacques de Gouvea, met with little success in this regard when the masters, fearful of incurring the wrath of their students, strenuously objected, and it was only in 1559 under the rectorship of Nicolas Chesneau that these *fêtes* were finally banned.

In his study on the Basochian theatre, H. G. Harvey states that censorship's influence on the decline of the medieval comic theatre has been overestimated and that its primary role was to determine the scope and bearing of satirical types of theatre. For him, especially as the question concerns the Basochian theatre, the reasons for the decline were twofold: after the middle of the sixteenth century the energies of dramatic expression turned to the new theatre of the Renaissance, and the special circumstances which gave the comic theatre its life—the questioning in a turbulent age of the noblest traditions of medieval civilization—disappeared. Referring

more specifically to the Basochians, the critic concludes that "In their satires, the lawyers and law clerks . . . were not moved by class spirit alone. They believed that they were crusaders against a decadent social order. They were Renaissance men."³⁹ And it is to be presumed that the *farceurs* and student actors were similarly motivated in their plays and that they too were in the above context "Renaissance men."

Unfortunately, the above evaluation of censorship's influence on the decline of the comic theatre is not satisfactory and leaves unanswered a number of questions. The thematic unity suggested—a class spirit, a crusade against a decadent social order, be it in the Basochian theatre or in the medieval comic theatre's repertory in general—does not exist; the diversity of subjects treated reflects to be sure the diversity, complexity, and changes occurring during the period, but it also shows more universal themes. While the satire can often be considered as a sort of anguished cry against some abuse, as in the *Moralité de la Croix Faubin*, it can be of such a type as would appeal also to different cultures and ages. Finally, the types of humor are not limited to that which evoked laughter from a particular historical period or from certain social classes.

Nor is the suggestion that new intellectual currents and a new orientation in literature caused the decline and disappearance of the medieval comic genres completely acceptable. To be sure, it was in the age of the Renaissance that a Peletier du Mans and a Sebillet were encouraging writers to compose comedies and tragedies in imitation of the Greeks and Romans, but as a rule the arts of poetry preceding Du Bellay's *Deffence et illustration* of 1549 tried to equate medieval dramatic genres with those of antiquity. While changes in aesthetic tastes and philosophical orientation certainly affected the evolution of the medieval comedy, these changes did not by themselves cause the demise of the medieval comic theatre; rather they should be considered only as contributory factors to its decline in that certain theatrical groups, like those of the students, turned to a more classical orientation in their dramatic expression and in that certain dramatists under a different set of circumstances would have written *moralités* or *sotties* instead of *comédies*. Not to be overlooked is the fact that the lower classes, that segment of society for which the medieval theatre had its greatest appeal, remained by and large unaffected by the intellectual revolution of the Renaissance. One needs only to point to the number of recorded performances after 1560 of *mystères*, *moralités*, and *farces*—especially in the provinces—for verification that medieval plays continued to enjoy a certain degree of popularity.⁴⁰

While the above factors played an important rôle in the theatre's decline, it was theatrical censorship as it was systematically enforced during the reign of Francis I which was responsible in large measure for the noticeable decrease in the number of new compositions of *farces*, *sotties*, and *moralités*

after 1535. The effectiveness of the curbs placed on comic actors is attested to in a number of plays. In the *Farce des Sobres-sots* (c. 1536) which probably belonged to the repertory of the Connards of Rouen, the third *sot* would like to point out the abuses of some powerful lord but does not dare do so: "Je le diroys bien, mais je n'ose, / Car le parler m'est deffendu." The fourth *sot* joins in by saying "C'est tout un, on n'a rendu / Compte de tout ce qu'on pensoyt." Later in the play a *badin* also refers to the regulations which must be observed by the *farceurs*: "A! messieurs, sy je n'avoys peur / Qu'on me serast trop fort les doys, / En peu de mos je vous feroys rire." The *Sottie pour le cri de la Basoche*, presented in 1548, offers one of the few discussions on satire and censorship. La Basoche tells her followers, Mireloret and Rapporte-Nouvelle, to guard themselves from talking too much and "Ne dire chose que mal" because the honor of the Basoche lies in saying nothing which is not profitable and praiseworthy. She also suggests that they should only say humorous things and avoid being critical of people. Nouvelle-Rapporte then wonders:

N'est-ce grand dommaige qu'on n'ose
Monstrer son mal au medecin
Et faire cracher au bassin
Ceulx la que tant je n'oze dire?

Thus as a result of censorship, the development of the genres in the medieval comic theatre was arrested by the middle of the sixteenth century and its vitality taken from it. Denied its freedom of expression, the nearly plotless *sottie* had to be pruned away, and the farce and *moralité* began to adopt more structured forms, divided into acts and scenes; to incorporate new material; and to be given the new classification of *comédie*.⁴¹

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, sources for the governmental and ecclesiastical edicts mentioned are to be found in A. Fabre, *Les Clercs du Palais* (Paris, 1875); L. Petit de Julleville, *Les Comédiens en France au moyen âge* (Paris, 1885), and *Répertoire du théâtre comique en France au moyen âge* (Paris, 1886); and H. G. Harvey, *The Theatre of the Basoche* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941). The only study to treat solely theatrical censorship in France, V. Hallays-Dabot's *Histoire de la censure théâtrale en France* (Paris, 1862), is often unreliable and of little value in the chapters concerned with the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

2. Although she used material from Terence in her dialogues, which were probably designed to be read rather than staged, the tenth-century Saxon nun, Hrotswitha of Gandersheim, did not understand the classical concept of theatre. Her first "Preface" is only an apology for borrowing material from pagan authors; see Hrotsvithae, *Opera*, ed. Karolus Strecker (Lipsiae, 1930), p. 113.

It is doubtful that the twelfth-century Latin *comoediae* had any influence on the development of the concept of theatre in the Middle Ages, although John of Salisbury, twelfth-century bishop and head of the school at Chartres, reveals a good understanding

of the nature of the theatre of antiquity (Joannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis, *Policratici sive de Nugis Curialium et Vestigiis Philosophorum Libri VII*, ed. Clemens C. I. Webb [Oxford, 1909], I, 46). For various theories on this question, see Grace Frank's *The Medieval French Drama* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 11-13 and Gustave Cohen's *Etudes d'histoire du théâtre en France au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance*, 5^e éd. (Paris, 1955), pp. 71-106.

3. C. Lenient, *La Satire en France au moyen âge* (Paris, 1893), p. 425.

4. Hallays-Dabot, p. 6. This critic also mentions that Charlemagne in an *ordonnance* dating from 789 stopped unspecified excesses committed by the *histrions* in his retinue (p. 4).

5. From the middle of the fifteenth century on, the legislative and judicial powers of the Parlement de Paris were curbed somewhat by the creation of independent royal *parlements* in certain provincial capitals—Toulouse in 1443, Bordeaux in 1467, Rouen in 1499, etc. Despite this erosion of jurisdiction over certain regions, it retained more or less its national character, and its pronouncements tended to influence those of its sister bodies.

6. For detailed studies on the history and structure of the Parlement de Paris, see F. Lot and R. Fawtier, *Histoire des Institutions françaises au Moyen Age*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1956-1962) and J. H. Shennan, *The Parlement of Paris* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1968).

7. In Paris, the principal center of late medieval dramatic activity, the Grande Basoche was the most active group in the comic theatre; having its own repertory, it also participated in presenting skits during important *entrées* into the capital and was affiliated with the Confrérie de la Passion in the staging of comic interludes—mostly farces and *moralités*—inserted into the mystery plays. For important studies on the role of the Basoches and similar groups in the development of the comic theatre, see A. Fabre, *Les Clercs*; Petit de Julleville, *Les Comédiens*; and H. G. Harvey, *The Theatre of the Basoche*.

8. For an excellent description of the mentality of the period, see I. Siciliano, *François Villon et les thèmes poétiques du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1934), pp. 3-25.

9. These documents are reproduced in Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du théâtre en France: Les Mystères*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1880), I, 414-419.

10. Epiphany, Shrove Tuesday, and May Day.

11. Shennan, p. 114.

12. Critics are in disagreement over the meaning of the above verses. Fabre (p. 140) and Petit de Julleville (*Les Comédiens*, pp. 101-102) believe that the play refers to Anne and Pierre de Beaujeu. Harvey (p. 227, n. 56) contends that Le Bâtard de Bourgogne, with whom Baude was involved in a lawsuit, was the object of the latter's satire. However, this interpretation appears to be incorrect in view of Charles VIII's justification for the action.

13. Petit de Julleville, *Les Comédiens*, p. 34.

14. L. Paris, *Le Théâtre à Reims* (Reims, 1885), p. 30. A similar situation existed at Tournay in 1499 when the annual *fêtes des Innocents* appeared to be particularly scandalous to the local churchmen. The town's magistrates favored the celebrations. A lawsuit between the two groups followed, and the Parlement de Paris had to issue a judgment.

15. Crévier, *Histoire de l'Université de Paris*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1761), IV, 283.

16. *Ibid.*, 433.

17. *La Farce de Pates-Ouaintes*, publiée par T. Bonnin (Evreux, 1843).
18. A detailed account of the affair is found in Petit de Julleville, *Répertoire*, pp. 330-335.
19. Jehan Bouchet, *Annales d'Acquittaine* (Poitiers, 1545), pt. IV, chap. xi. See also his *Epistres morales et familières du Traverseur* (Poitiers, 1545), p. 32d.
20. Guillaume Bouchet, *Les Serées*, avec notice et index par C. E. Roybet, 6 vols. (Paris, 1873-1882), III, 19.
21. See, for example, the *Sotise du Monde*, Abuz, *Sot-Dissolu* (Paris, n.d.) where the king's parsimony is ridiculed.
22. Brantôme corroborates this position of the king. See his *Oeuvres complètes*, publiées . . . par L. Lalanne, 11 vols. (Paris, 1864-1882), VII, 316 and IX, 472.
23. For analyses of the plays from this period, see Petit de Julleville, *Répertoire*.
24. Shennan, chaps. V-VI. See also R. Doucet, *Les Institutions de la France au XVI^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1948), I, 320 ff.
25. *Le Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris sous le règne de François I^{er} (1515-1536)*, nouvelle édition . . . par V.-L. Bourrilly (Paris, 1910), pp. 14-15.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 39 ff.
27. In principle Francis did not object to the medieval comic plays. See, for example, the payments made by him for the staging of farces at court in the *Catalogue des actes de François I^{er}*, 10 vols. (Paris 1887-1908), IV, 203, no. 11938 and VIII, 303, no. 32152. See also Petit de Julleville, *Les Comédiens*, p. 383.
28. *Journal*, p. 226.
30. M. Félibien, *Histoire de la ville de Paris*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1724), II, 634.
31. One play, the *Farce du retour du mariage*, was not allowed to be staged. Two years later, Le Pardonneur returned to Rouen, but reflecting the growing influence of the Calvinists, the magistrates refused to allow him to stage any plays because it would entail a useless expenditure of money by the spectators. Finally, in 1563 the Parlement de Rouen, now controlled by the Calvinists, permanently banned all theatrical representations in the city.
32. In his *Répertoire*, pp. 323-402, which contains an impressive analytical "Catalogue des représentations de pièces comiques" before 1600, Petit de Julleville records numerous occasions when financial aid was given to local dramatic groups for the staging of farces and *moralités*.
33. In 1540 the Basochian and later poet, François Habert, returned to his native Issoudun to present plays from the repertory of the Basoche. Unfortunately, the local magistrates deemed the plays too satirical and dangerous for the maintenance of public order, and they imprisoned Habert.
34. At Noyon in 1539, for example, the church chapter forbade the staging in the church of the *Mystère de la Béguine*, which was probably a *moralité*.
35. See Petit de Julleville, *Répertoire*, pp. 365-400.
36. For more details on the French Protestant theatre, see G. D. Jonker, *Le Protestantisme et le théâtre de langue française au XVI^e siècle* (Groningen, 1939), chap. 4.
37. *Ibid.*, chaps. 8 and 12. Calvin himself was not at first opposed to the staging of comic plays which were edifying. Much of the opposition to the theatre came from other *pasteurs* who initially objected to plays because of their lack of utility but whose

later arguments for total proscription of all forms of dramatic entertainment echoed the position of the early Church Fathers. In 1560 at Poitiers the Synod banned all dances, comedies, and *mommeries*. This action was superseded in 1572 by a more precise one issued at Nîmes which prohibited Calvinists from even attending theatrical performances; however, plays treating predetermined secular themes could on rare occasions and with special permission be staged in the colleges.

38. Toward the middle of the sixteenth century many universities were favorable to the Reform. On a number of occasions the student theatre of Bordeaux, encouraged by the masters and sympathetic to the Protestants, was opposed by the loyally Catholic repertory of the law clerks, and it became necessary from time to time for the Parlement to step in and resolve certain points of conflict.

39. Harvey, pp. 232-234.

40. See Petit de Julleville, *Répertoire*, pp. 394-402.

41. In Junker's study (op. cit., chap. 4) and in Petit de Julleville's *Répertoire*, it is striking the number of farces and *moralités* which carry the title *Comédie* and which are often divided into acts and scenes. In her *Caractéristiques essentielles de la farce française et leur survivance dans les années 1550-1620* (Urbana, Ill., 1964), Barbara C. Bowen has shown a number of themes, stylistic devices, and other traits coming from the medieval farce which are to be found in a large number of *comédies* composed between 1552 and 1628.